

**Office of the President**

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August 31, 2006

The Honorable Thomas Coburn
Chairman, Subcommittee on Federal Financing, Management,
Government Information & International Security
United State Senate
172 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510

Via facsimile (202) 228-3796

Dear Senator Coburn:

Thank you for your July 27 letter to President Merten inquiring about the George Mason University's use of federal funding to advance scientific research. Dr. Merten is on travel and in his absence has asked that I respond to your letter. George Mason shares your belief that federal support is a critical part of sustaining higher education's role in the research and development that drives American innovation.

George Mason is proud of its work with the federal government across a range of agencies and departments. Our partnership with the federal government has produced significant benefits that have improved the life of American citizens. George Mason relies on a variety of private and public funding opportunities to support these research programs.

Your letter asked us to respond to a number of questions for your committee. Below are those questions and our responses.

1. Please provide a list of all appropriations received by your institution from the year 2000 to the present, and the amount of assistance received.

Funding through the annual federal appropriations process is one of many sources of funding that George Mason University utilizes to support its overall research programs. When George Mason does seek federal appropriations support, we work closely with Senator John Warner and Senator George Allen to carefully review potential projects and match them with existing opportunities in the federal budget. All of our requests follow the standard vetting processes of Virginia's Senators and the Senate Appropriations Committee. Given the processes that Senators Warner and Allen have established for reviewing and considering earmarking requests from institutions of higher education in Virginia and the fact that all earmarks arise from the action of the Congress, it would seem most appropriate for your request to be directed either to your colleagues in the Senate, Senators Allen and Warner, or to the Senate Appropriations Committee which approves all earmarking requests. In addition, the Chronicle of Higher Education annually produces a listing of projects it believes are funded through earmarks, broken down by university.

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2. Please provide a summary of the specific objectives or goals set to be achieved by any entity, program, project or service associated with an appropriation at your institution.

George Mason's sponsored research program exceeds \$65 million per year and includes dozens of individual projects. It would require an extraordinary commitment of time and resources on the part of the university Administration to gather the information you request from the individual faculty conducting the various research projects underway at the university.

3. How does your institution set a measure for standards to achieve outcomes for entities, programs, projects or services receiving assistance through earmarks or appropriations?

Individual primary investigators, in conjunction with sponsoring agencies seek to establish appropriate measures for work undertaken. Frequently measures employed include: (1) the numbers of publications in peer-reviewed journals; (2) quality of publications; (3) invitations to speak at national and international meetings; (4) numbers of intellectual property disclosures; (5) new research proposals emanating from the research; (6) the likelihood that the research will result in tangible improvements to the field of knowledge.

4. Does your institution have a stated policy regarding Congressional earmarks or appropriations?

No.

5. Has your institution considered hiring a lobbyist to assist your institution in attaining familiarity with the opportunities that may exist to obtain Federal funds for research - such as the earmarking process?

Yes.

6. In conclusion, do you find Congressionally earmarked funds to have contributed in a substantive way to your academic institution?

Yes.

Thank you again for your inquiry and your continued leadership in supporting federal investment in research and development activities conducted in the higher education community.

Sincerely yours,



J. Thomas Hennessey, Jr. Ph.D.
Chief of Staff